# European nations pivot against Israel amid Gaza crisis and military tactics



The British newspaper *The Telegraph* has reported a notable decline in support for Israel from European nations, a shift attributed to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's military tactics in the Gaza Strip. The article highlights criticisms of these tactics, particularly Operation "Gideon's Chariot," which aims to expand Israeli territorial claims by displacing populations within Gaza. As this operation coincides with a complete blockade of the region, widespread outrage has erupted among European leaders, triggering calls for a ban on arms exports to Israel from countries that have traditionally held strong pro-Israel stances.

A significant moment in this evolving narrative came from German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, whose recent remarks indicated that the Israeli military strikes are “no longer understandable or justified.” This marks a dramatic pivot for Germany, a country previously uncompromising in its support for Israeli military actions, especially given its status as Israel's second-largest arms supplier after the United States. Merz’s statements reflect mounting pressure within his coalition, as many leaders express a desire to distance themselves from potential complicity in what international observers are calling war crimes. In response, Israeli officials have fiercely condemned this criticism, with Foreign Minister Gideon Sa’ar warning that any halt in arms shipments could lead to catastrophic outcomes for Israel.

The humanitarian implications of the conflict are alarming. The ongoing operations have resulted in a devastating humanitarian crisis, with reports currently indicating that over 50,000 Palestinian civilians have perished due to the violence, and essential infrastructure has been ravaged. Critics argue that the continued blockade, which includes restrictions on food and medical supplies, is both morally and legally indefensible. Prominent Israeli figures, including former Prime Ministers Ehud Barak and Ehud Olmert, have voiced their discontent over the government's aggressive tactics. This domestic dissent is juxtaposed against Netanyahu's steadfast position, as he accuses European nations of misalignment with historical truths.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has also come under scrutiny for her previous support of Israel, which now seems at odds with the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Gaza. Following her comments condemning the violence as a “terrible escalation,” there is growing sentiment among EU leaders for a reevaluation of their trade relations with Israel. An initiative, prompted by the Netherlands, has garnered support from 17 of the 27 EU member states. This development signals a potential shift toward imposing a broader arms embargo and reconsidering diplomatic ties with Israel.

Spain and Ireland have emerged as key players in these efforts, leading calls to officially recognise a Palestinian state. The recognition, which both nations pursued after previously being accused of antisemitism, reflects a broader shift in European diplomacy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Irish Prime Minister Michael Martin has articulated a viewpoint that strongly criticises the Netanyahu government’s policies, describing them as genocidal. His government is pushing for EU-wide support to halt the import of products from Israeli settlements, further aligning with the rising tide of criticism from within Europe.

France has also repositioned itself, joining the push for recognition of Palestinian statehood after previously assuring Israel that such a move would not be considered. Observers warn that an upcoming international conference in Paris could further shift European recognition towards Palestine, presenting Israel with a significant diplomatic challenge. This evolving landscape brings to light the complex interplay of geopolitical interests, humanitarian concerns, and domestic pressures faced by European governments as they reassess their long-standing alliances.

While Netanyahu continues to assert that European nations are on "the wrong side of history," the current atmosphere hints at profound shifts within Europe. As resentment grows over Israel’s military operations and humanitarian crises, it remains unclear how strong this shift in opinion might become, or what tangible actions will follow. The historical and moral implications are significant, as European nations grapple with their responses to an unfolding tragedy in Gaza that has captured global attention and sparked renewed calls for justice and accountability.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.voxnews.al/english/kosovabota/the-telegraph-si-netanyahu-e-humbi-europen-i93132), [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/548d2a75-ecac-4522-826c-f1d89cd4d1cd)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.voxnews.al/english/kosovabota/the-telegraph-si-netanyahu-e-humbi-europen-i93132), [[6]](https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/gaza-war-testing-germanys-long-unconditional-commitment-israel-2025-05-28/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[5]](https://elpais.com/internacional/2025-05-25/aumentan-las-criticas-a-von-der-leyen-por-su-silencio-sobre-gaza.html), [[4]](https://www.huffingtonpost.es/politica/unno-reconocer-palestina-espana-reafirma-liderar-presion-gazabr.html)
* Paragraph 4 – [[3]](https://elpais.com/opinion/2025-05-25/gaza-necesita-algo-mas-que-palabras.html), [[4]](https://www.huffingtonpost.es/politica/unno-reconocer-palestina-espana-reafirma-liderar-presion-gazabr.html)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.voxnews.al/english/kosovabota/the-telegraph-si-netanyahu-e-humbi-europen-i93132), [[5]](https://elpais.com/internacional/2025-05-25/aumentan-las-criticas-a-von-der-leyen-por-su-silencio-sobre-gaza.html)
* Paragraph 6 – [[7]](https://cadenaser.com/nacional/2025/05/26/alemania-advierte-que-israel-sobrepasa-los-limites-con-su-ofensiva-en-gaza-pero-descarta-un-embargo-de-armas-cadena-ser/), [[1]](https://www.voxnews.al/english/kosovabota/the-telegraph-si-netanyahu-e-humbi-europen-i93132)
* Paragraph 7 – [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/548d2a75-ecac-4522-826c-f1d89cd4d1cd), [[5]](https://elpais.com/internacional/2025-05-25/aumentan-las-criticas-a-von-der-leyen-por-su-silencio-sobre-gaza.html)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.voxnews.al/english/kosovabota/the-telegraph-si-netanyahu-e-humbi-europen-i93132> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/548d2a75-ecac-4522-826c-f1d89cd4d1cd> - This article discusses the escalating tension between European nations and Israel, particularly over the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Initially supportive of Israel following Hamas' attack on October 7, 2023, European governments have become increasingly critical of Israel’s prolonged blockade and military actions. They argue that withholding food and aid is morally and legally indefensible, and many blame Israel for Gaza's worsening humanitarian conditions. EU countries, including the UK and France, have condemned the violence and suspended diplomatic and economic cooperation. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and top officials responded with denunciations, accusing Europe of antisemitism and siding with terrorists. Despite limited resumption of aid, European leaders are urged to intensify pressure, as starvation and civilian casualties continue. Prominent Israelis, including former prime ministers Ehud Barak and Ehud Olmert, have strongly criticized the government's tactics. The article asserts that Europe must persist in holding Netanyahu accountable for his government's actions in Gaza, highlighting the growing domestic Israeli opposition and the need for a just and sustainable resolution.
3. <https://elpais.com/opinion/2025-05-25/gaza-necesita-algo-mas-que-palabras.html> - The article highlights the catastrophic humanitarian crisis in Gaza due to Israel's relentless military offensive led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Despite international initiatives and announced measures, violence continues unabated. Over 50,000 Palestinian civilians have died, and hunger has led to the collapse of social order. Health infrastructure is devastated, with hospitals destroyed and a shortage of beds. Meanwhile, 80% of Gaza's territory has been declared prohibited, further hindering survival. Concurrently, Netanyahu strengthens his political power in Israel, ignoring international warnings and facing controversies such as the appointment of a new intelligence chief and corruption allegations related to Qatari funds intended for Gaza. Despite Israeli protests demanding a ceasefire and hostage release, Netanyahu remains indifferent. The international community, so far ineffective, must adopt effective pressure measures to achieve a ceasefire and stop the suffering of millions of innocent people in Gaza.
4. <https://www.huffingtonpost.es/politica/unno-reconocer-palestina-espana-reafirma-liderar-presion-gazabr.html> - On the first anniversary of Spain's official recognition of Palestine, the government led by Pedro Sánchez reaffirms its commitment to the Palestinian cause and intensifies international efforts to halt the war in Gaza. Spain, along with Ireland and Norway, recognised the State of Palestine in May 2024, deteriorating diplomatic relations with Israel. Since then, the Spanish Executive has promoted measures such as suspending the EU-Israel association agreement and imposing an arms embargo on Israel. It has also supported the International Criminal Court's actions against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for crimes against humanity. Additionally, Spain has promoted international peace conferences and engaged in forums like the Arab League to reinforce humanitarian aid in Gaza, where the Israeli offensive has caused over 54,000 deaths, including 16,200 children. Although the Government has faced criticism for contracts to purchase arms from Israeli companies, one of which was cancelled, it considers itself a leader in recognising the Palestinian State in Europe.
5. <https://elpais.com/internacional/2025-05-25/aumentan-las-criticas-a-von-der-leyen-por-su-silencio-sobre-gaza.html> - European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen faces increasing criticism for her silence regarding Israel's military offensive in Gaza. Voices within the European Parliament, governments, and EU officials accuse her of bias due to her early and explicit support for Israel after Hamas' attacks in October 2023, while remaining silent on alleged violations of international law by Netanyahu's government. European diplomacy has initiated a review of the association agreement with Israel to determine if it respects human rights, but there are concerns that von der Leyen could slow down or delay the process. European officials and legal organisations have demanded concrete actions to prevent crimes against humanity, even warning of taking the Commission to the EU Court of Justice. This situation has raised concerns about the EU's reputation for impartiality, contrasting its firmness with Russia over Ukraine with its leniency towards Israel. Many voices are calling for the Commission to take a clear stance and effective measures in the face of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, to avoid repeating historical mistakes like those in Rwanda or Srebrenica.
6. <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/gaza-war-testing-germanys-long-unconditional-commitment-israel-2025-05-28/> - Germany's traditionally unwavering support for Israel is being reevaluated amidst the ongoing Gaza war, which has seen over 53,000 Palestinian deaths following a Hamas attack in 2023. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz and other top officials, including Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul and Finance Minister Lars Klingbeil, have expressed growing concern over Israel's military actions and the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, marking a notable rhetorical shift. This change reflects evolving German public opinion, especially among younger generations less tied to Holocaust-era guilt and increasingly sympathetic toward Palestinians. Germany’s demographic changes, with a significant Middle Eastern and Muslim population, contribute to this shift. Though Germany remains a key Israeli ally—supplying arms and standing with Israel in international forums—the current critique signifies a significant change in tone and potential policy direction. This mirrors broader Western reactions, with France, Britain, and Canada voicing similar concerns. Despite this, concrete actions against Israel remain absent, keeping support largely intact.
7. <https://cadenaser.com/nacional/2025/05/26/alemania-advierte-que-israel-sobrepasa-los-limites-con-su-ofensiva-en-gaza-pero-descarta-un-embargo-de-armas-cadena-ser/> - German Chancellor Friedrich Merz has strongly criticised Israel's offensive in the Gaza Strip, describing recent attacks on the civilian population as unjustifiable. This stance represents a partial break from Germany's traditional defence of Israel since Hamas' attacks in October 2023. Despite the criticism, Germany rules out imposing an arms embargo on Israel, reaffirming its commitment to the right of existence of the Israeli state. German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul emphasised that Germany will continue supplying arms as part of that commitment, despite growing pressures, such as Spain's proposal in international forums to sanction Israel and officially recognise the Palestinian State to halt the war.